Milfoil Advisory Group Meeting Minutes
November 25, 2020 4 p.m.
Remote/Zoom

Ken Trester called the meeting to order.

Present: Ken Trester, Scott Dean, Bob Shuchman, Patrick Burroughs, Tim Straker,
Staff Present: Karen Doyle Homan
Also Present: Garnet Lewis, Melissa DeSimone, Zach Berry, Ryan Schauland, Jason Broekstra, Andy Tomaszewski, Mike Smith, Kim Arter

Public Comment: None

Discussion: This meeting was built around a panel discussion. Because of the back and forth nature of the discussion, these minutes are a synopsis of the discussion:

The panel:

- Melissa DeSimone, Executive Director, Michigan Lakes and Streams Association
- Zach Berry, Biologist, General Manager, Aquatic Doctors
- Ryan Schauland, Biologist/Aquatic Ecosystems, President/Owner, Aquatic Doctors
- Andy Tomaszewski, Biologist, PLM Lake & Land Management Corp
- Jason Broekstra, Biologist, VP of Great Lakes Operations, PLM Lake & Land Mngmt Corp
- Michael Smith, Owner, Mtt DASH Divers
- Kim Arter, Laketon Township Supervisor, President, Bear Lake Lake Board

Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM) is responsible for the loss of biodiversity in our natural water systems. The EWM is an invasive species, is super prolific, grows quickly, grows densely, and outcompetes anything it comes across. To restore the natural ecosystem, the milfoil must be controlled.

Discussed were the following possible solutions to control EWM:

- Weevils: Weevils were once promising for long-term control of EWM. They are hard to propagate for commercial use and not used anymore.

- Barriers: Benthic barriers are Illegal in Michigan. They smother the plants, killing off native species as well. They are not suitable for flowing water or in large areas.

- Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting (DASH) is being used successfully if contained to a small area, less than an acre if dense, or if in a larger area, scattered. It is not practical for large areas. The Kalamazoo Harbor infestation is considered a large area.

- Sonar: Unlike conventional treatments Sonar is like chlorinating a swimming pool, dosage is based on 6 ppb concentration. It will kill EWM at that concentration but will not impact native plants. Risky option in our case because it needs to stay 60 days to be effective.

- Aeration: Aeration is great to restore health to an inland lake with algae blooms. Not effective for EWM or recommended in a flowing system.

- Harvesting: Harvesters mow the milfoil under water. It is a short- term relief method without any long-term benefits. The resulting fragmentation spreads it further.

- Herbicide: Herbicides placed appropriately, systemically, and properly, will cause the die off of the invasive species without harming the native species. Granulated herbicide products are recommended because they are less impacted by flow.

Based upon our size, flow, and depth what can we rule out? Weevils, barriers, aeration, sonar, cutting without DASH, all these are not viable for our need. Herbicides, at least until we get the EWM under control, are recommended. Other long-term options may be viable down the road.

Mike Smith, DASH Divers, stated "chemicals do a great job. DASH is a tool to back that up. It's not feasible to do 20 acres but it is good for backing up the chemical to keep its use down in the future."

Aquatic Doctors have had success using herbicide in Wade's Bayou in the City of Douglas. The flow in Wade's Bayou and in Kalamazoo Lake Harbor are similar. Milfoil grows in low flow areas and is usually not seen within high flow, high velocity areas.

Are there unintended consequences, for example, taking out sport fishing? The panel agreed that by taking out the overcompetitive invasive species, Mother Nature can do her job and native plants can re-establish. After just one year of treatment in Wade's Bayou, native plants are starting to fill in those areas where the milfoil was taken out. The consequences if we let it go are collapse of the eco-system. The natives that the "little critters" like will be gone. Fish will disappear because there is no food source for them.

When asked about treating coontail and duckweed, Aquatic Doctors stated that they do have products that can be used on those, however, EGLE imposes much more stringent guidelines for using herbicides and algaecides for coontail and duckweed as those are native species.

Bob Shuchman thought that we do have a problem with native weeds but getting the milfoil under control will help to naturally get the duck week and coontail under control. He suggested reading the article, Management of Aquatic Plants that was within the meeting packet.

Also asked were questions about treating to the shoreline, to the edge of docks, around docks, or to the seawall. Again, permitting depends on what areas and/or species we want treated. There are different regulations for each.

Are there efficiencies in cost if we joined Douglas? Aquatic Doctors replied that yes, they can offer a volume cost price break and getting both jobs on the same permit would also be a savings.

There will be naysayers. The advice was to educate people that control of Eurasian milfoil will allow the return of the beneficial native plants. Herbicide is effective; it is not the herbicide killing the native plants but is the milfoil choking them out; the native plants will come back when the milfoil leaves. There are also some people who do not want any weeds, native or not. What may help is education on the difference between good plants and bad (invasive) plants and what is best for the health of the water.

There are 3rd party resources that may allay some fears. The Michigan Aquatic Manager's Association www.MAMAGroup.org, MSU Extension, Watershed Council, Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas https://www.invasive.org/cismas/ are a few. The Kalamazoo Lake Harbor Authority, Kieser and Associates are also knowledgeable sources. Bear Lake Lake Board put out info to everyone on Bear Lake that can be found on their website www.Laketon.org/BLLB. Melissa DeSimone offered to send information regarding good resources as well.

Education needs to be part of the long-range plan. Discourage fertilizer on lawns. Encourage native plantings on shorelines that will reduce run-off. At boat launches put wash sites with clippers and brush and "check your boats" signage. Mike Smith stated, "DASH divers can always tell who is using fertilizer on their lawns. Old septic tanks also are perfect environments for invasive to grow."

The panel was thanked for their candor. Each brought a dimension that the advisory committee needed.

Next meeting is December 9 at 4 o'clock. The committee felt they had the information needed to make a recommendation on how to move forward. Funding mechanisms will be part of the next meeting's discussion as well.

The Committee adjourned at 6:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Karen Doyle Homan